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Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Consumer
Service

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Reply to
Attn. of: SP 97-01

Subject: School Meals Initiative (SMI) Policy Guidance - Questions
and Answers

To: STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS - Colorado ED, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri ED,
(Child Nutrition Programs) Montana OPI, Nebraska ED, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming ED

This memorandum provides policy guidance on a variety of SMI related issues
which have been raised in the last few months. The attached guidance is in a
question-and-answer format.

Please contact the Special Projects Section if you have questions.

Ann C. DeGroat

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Regional Director
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Attachments

**NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST
PROGRAM SCHOOL MEALS INITIATIVE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (10/96)**

1. Q. Part 210.19 of the Regulations says that the nutrient analysis should be assessed for the "last completed school week prior to the review period" for schools choosing Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus) and Assisted NuMenus and "menu(s) served during the review period" for food-based schools. Because review period is not defined in the regulations (the CRE review period definition does not appear to apply to SMI monitoring), it appears that discretion is left to the state to define review period. Since it appears that any completed school week can be reviewed, is this acceptable?

A. There are different periods for NuMenus and Assisted NuMenus and food-based alternatives. This will be addressed in the regulation reinstating the meal pattern and adding guidelines on any reasonable approach. At this time, state agencies may choose any completed week, including a week within a CRE review period.
2. Q. On December 6, 1995, SP-96-05 was issued. One of the subjects of this memorandum was "Prioritizing Evaluations of Nutrition Compliance in the National School Lunch Program." It urged states to prioritize reviews so that schools that continued to use the current meal pattern were evaluated and the nutritional analysis conducted within the first 2 years of implementation. However, now that Public Law (P.L.) 104-149 has been passed and all schools now have the option to continue to use the traditional meal pattern without justification, are States still encouraged to review these sites in the first 2 years?

A. State agencies are not required to make reviews of school food authorities (SFA) using the traditional meal pattern a priority; however, we encourage state agencies to give these schools priority in their review schedules, since research suggests that schools using the traditional meal pattern will have a greater challenge in meeting the Dietary Guidelines and nutrition standards than those selecting other options.
3. Q. Based on their reading of P.L. 104-149, state agency personnel have questioned whether food production records are required to be maintained at the local level.

A. Food production records are required by Part 210.10(a)(3) for all menu planning alternatives.

4. Q. Are states required to conduct a nutrient analysis of schools using the traditional meal pattern?

A. State agencies are required to conduct a nutrient analysis in any SFA not doing its own nutrient analysis on approved software. This includes SFAs choosing the traditional meal pattern alternative.
5. Q. The weighting waiver exempts schools from 210.10(i)(5), 220.8(e)(5) and 210.19(a)(1)(ii). Part 210.10(i)(5)(iii) allows a combined analysis for breakfast and lunch menus. It states, "At its option, a school food authority may combine analysis of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Such analysis shall be proportionate to the levels of participation in the two programs in accordance with guidance issued by FCS." Does the weighting waiver apply to the combined analysis?

A. The weighting waiver applies to a combined analysis of the lunch and breakfast programs. However, the number of meals in each program is still proportionate in the analysis. Please see Appendix I of Lesson 9 in the Healthy School Meals Training handbook for more details on how a combined analysis is conducted. Many, if not all, of the approved software nutrient analysis programs contain a function which will combine the breakfast and lunch analyses automatically.
6. Q. What is the status of the proposed regulations concerning "any reasonable approach" and will monitoring be addressed in these regulations?

A. "Any reasonable approach" will be addressed in the proposed rule along with the reinstatement of the meal pattern. Monitoring of this alternative will also be discussed in the proposal. It is expected that a proposed rule will be published for comment soon.
7. Q. With the recent passage of P.L. 104-193, how will the law affect the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs? What impact does this law have on the School Meals Initiative, especially the requirement for schools to meet the nutrition standards and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans?

A. The only provision of welfare reform that addresses the nutrition standards for school meals is the requirement that school meals meet percentages of the Recommended Dietary Allowances. Since these percentages are already in the regulations, no changes will be made. Schools are still required by statute and regulation to serve meals that

comply with the Dietary Guidelines and the updated nutrition standards.

8. Q. Is there a cycle for SMI reviews and does it need to be the same 5-year cycle as CRE?
 - A. Currently, the SMI and CRE cycles are two different cycles as described in the regulations. They may be the same cycle or they may not depending on how the SA determines each cycle. The requirement is that each SFA be reviewed under SMI at least once during every 5 years and a CRE conducted once during every 5 years. A technical change may be made in the new proposed regulation which puts them into the same cycle.
9. Q. If the SA has completed the CRE cycle a year early and has no CRE reviews to do this year (FY 1997), are SMI reviews required to be conducted this year or may the SA concentrate only on SMI technical assistance?
 - A. The requirement must be met that each SFA is reviewed under SMI once every 5 years. The SMI cycle shall begin July 1996, but reviews may not start until July 1997 at the SA's discretion. However, at the very least, reviews of all school food authorities must take place from July 1996 - June 2001. It is up to the SA to determine what year or month the reviews begin. However, a technical change may occur in the regulations which make the cycles the same.